



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.1801 | FAX (517) 373.5801

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hardiman/

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Contact: Alan Bolter
517-373-1801

Sen. Hardiman's bill to help youngest victims of meth abuse sent to governor

LANSING — Sen. Bill Hardiman's legislation to help Michigan children exposed to methamphetamine production and abuse headed to the governor today.

"The sad epidemic of meth has already hurt too many people in West Michigan," said Hardiman, R-Kentwood. "Meth producers clearly have little concern for their own lives so it's no surprise that children present where the drug is made and used are the most devastated. Local authorities need the ability to act quickly to protect these youngsters."

Hardiman's Senate Bill 1116 would require the Department of Human Services to partner with local law enforcement officials when a child has been exposed to meth.

The drug continues to be a growing threat as it is highly addictive and can be easily made using chemicals and household products readily available. Additionally, cleaning up after a meth lab bust is difficult. The chemicals used are highly explosive and have an extreme toxicity level that can permanently contaminate houses, vehicles, or hotel rooms where the drug is manufactured. After a bust, these areas are treated as hazardous waste sites.

The legislation also protects children who possibly have been exposed to the dangerous toxins during the production process. While meth is "cooked," fumes are released into the air that can cause allergies, asthma and colds, as well as learning disabilities and psychological problems. Many children have also been burned by the chemicals or equipment used to make the drug.

The multiple-bill package that Hardiman's bill is a part of also would require:

- Statewide criteria that every community should follow in order for a home or other meth production site to be considered clean and ready for future occupancy;
- The Department of Environmental Quality to report the nature of environmental contamination materials found during meth lab busts to the state Legislature; and,
- A public Web site listing meth busts and indicating what sites have been cleaned.

The ingredients used to produce the highly-addictive drug are readily available through chemicals and a number of household products including over-the-counter cold medication. In 2005, the Legislature restricted the sale of all cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine, one of the main ingredients found in meth.